

Connecticut Coalition of Police Officers to Prevent Domestic Violence

Testimony in support of House Bill 6629

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Thank you Chairman Fox, Chairman Coleman and all members of the Judiciary Committee. Also, I would like to specifically thank Representative Flexer for her hard work as Chairwoman of the Speaker's Task for on Domestic Violence. My name is John Szewczyk. I am a nine year veteran of the Hartford Police Department and a Selectman in the Town of Durham, Connecticut. I am also the Chairman and a founding member of the Connecticut Coalition of Police Officers to Prevent Domestic Violence. I am here today to testify in support of House Bill 6629.

The Coalition believes this bill is a good starting point for needed improvements to Connecticut's Domestic Violence Laws. Specifically, in regard to the bail bond system (Section 18), we are encouraged by this bill's requirement that a minimum down payment of 35% of the premium rate will now be required. We hope this is a starting point and that soon the full premium will be required. Under this bill, an individual with a \$10,000 bond can be bonded out from with only \$297.50, the remainder to be paid in a payment plan. To reiterate, although this bill is an improvement from the current situation, we hope that eventually the full premium will be required. We also continue to recommend that a Connecticut Bail Commissioner examine the bond amount on every domestic arrest before an individual is allowed to post bond. Lastly, we recommend that a mandatory minimum bond amount be established for all domestic arrests. We feel these changes will allow for a cooling off period that is often needed in many domestic arrests, thereby decreasing the chances for additional violence.

Lastly, we are strongly supportive that this bill calls for a task force to be established to help develop policy for law enforcement agencies when responding to domestic violence incidents (Section 23). The coalition continues to push for increased training for new and existing officers in regard to domestic violence situations. We feel there should be increased emphasis on training for police officers on how to recognize and act on instances of domestic violence within teen relationships.

In closing, I urge the Judiciary Committee to support this bill as a first step to improving Connecticut's Domestic Violence Laws. Thank you for your time here today. I am more than willing to answer any questions that you may have.